DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 301 921 EA 020 296

AUTHOR Nwanne, Andrew I.
TITLE The Perceptions of Public School Principals in the State of Texas toward Selected United States Supreme Court Decisions Concerning Desegregation Issues.
PUB DATE 87
NOTE 15p.
PUB TYPE Legal/Legislative/Regulatory Materials (090) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Attitudes; *Desegregation Litigation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Protection; *Mexican Americans; *Principals; *Public Schools; Racial Discrimination; Research Needs
IDENTIFIERS Brown v Board of Education; *Texas

ABSTRACT

Desegregation issues continue to be the focus of court litigation in public schools. Since the "Brown v. Board of Education" decision, federal courts have consistently upheld that legally compelled racial segregation of students is a denial of equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment. Since public school principals play a vital role in implementing court rulings, school board regulations, and state laws, their attitudes toward desegregation litigation is important. This study focused on principals' perceptions, because a 1983 study indicated that Texas schools continue to segregate Mexican-American children. The study attempts to determine the extent of agreement or disagreement toward desegregation rulings by a randomly chosen sample of 600 Texas principals. Using chi-square and other techniques, the study found that a significant percentage of principals agreed with the court decisions. Years of experience and ethnic origin were variables influencing principals' agreement or disagreement with selected court decisions. Sex, type of school, and school district size did not seem to affect agreement or disagreement. Research is needed to determine whether principals' knowledge of school law influences their level of agreement or disagreement. Included is a table analyzing principals' perceptions and seven references. (MLH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED3019921

THE PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THE STATE OF TEXAS TOWARD SELECTED UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT DECISIONS CONCERNING DESEGREGATION ISSUES

A. I. Nwanne

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A. I. Nwanne

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 020 296

ABSTRACT A.I. NWANNE

The problem of this study was to determine the extent of agreement or disagreement by public school principals in the State of Texas toward selected court decisions concerning desegregation issues. The population of the study consisted of all the public school principals in the State of Texas. From this population, a sample of 600 potential respondents were chosen for participation in the study using a random sampling technique.

Using the chi-square test of independence, followed by the z-test for significant difference between proportions for unequal sample sizes, it was found that a significantly greater percentage of the principals across all variables were in agreement with the court decisions. Analyses of these data also showed that the years of experience and ethnic origin of the principals tended to be variables influencing their levels of agreement or disagreement with the selected court decisions, but that the type of school in which public school principals are employed, sex and the size of school district did not seem to significantly affect their levels of agreement or disagreement with the selected court decisions.

A major recommendation of this study was that research should be conducted to determine whether or not the extent of a principal's knowledge of school law has an effect on his or her level of agreement or disagreement with the United States Supreme Court decisions affecting desegregation issues.

THE PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THE STATE OF TEXAS TOWARD SELECTED UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT DECISIONS CONCERNING DESEGREGATION ISSUES

Introduction

The issues of desegregation have been and may continue to be the focus of litigations in public schools. However, the most significant landmark decision aimed at terminating segregation in public schools is Brown v. Board of Education case, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). The Supreme Court ruled that segregation of white and black children in the public schools of a state solely on the basis of race, pursuant to state laws permitting or requiring such segregation, denies black children the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteen Amendment --- even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors of white and black schools may be equal ---- Reid (1983) noted that since the Brown v. Board Education Case, the Federal Courts have consistently taken the position that legally compelled segregation of students by race is a denial of equal protection under law as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment, but support from the Federal government's executive and legislative branches, have not been consistent. Henderson and Hall (1985) found that, thirty years after the Supreme Court's landmark decision on Brown v. Board of Education Case, the equity sought by the plaintiffs

and the class of people who they represented was not realized. They advocated a move toward the ideal of equal opportunity based on the constitutional ground that gave rise to Brown: equal protection under the law.

Relying on this principle of terminating segregation in public schools, the Supreme Court in another case, Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, 402 U.S. 1 (1971) ruled that the use of busing to achieve racial desegregation is a judicially acceptable alternative where de jure segregation has been proven to exist. The court reasoning was that the remedial technique was reasonably designed to provide equitable relief and the time or distance of travel was not great as to risk the health of the children or impinge on the educational process. Some observers saw the implications of this court decision in different form. Reynolds (1984) charged that mandatory busing is an excellent example of the contemporary inclination to view a group-oriented social problem -- racial stratification in public schools -- as a civil rights issue and to seek to solve it with coercive judicial remedies. In the process, he noted that the social problem is generally worsened, and the real civil right -- the individual student's right to be free from racial discrimination in assignment -- is invariably sacrificed.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

As a result of the vital role of public school principals in implementing the rulings of the courts, school board regula-

tions and state laws, it is important to ascertain their perceptions -- their attitudes -- toward court decisions dealing with desegregation issues. This study was focused, specifically, on the principals' perceptions because San Miguel Study (1983) incidated that despite the efforts of Mexican American groups such as G. I. Forum and court orders to end segregation, schools in Texas continue to segregate Mexican American children. Also, this research was based upon the assumption that one's beliefs or attitudes influences his or her behavior. In addition, it is recognized that one's beliefs or attitudes toward a situation influences his or her perceptions, and that one's perceptions of a situation is influenced by one's beliefs or attitudes. Shaw and Wright (1967) point out that:

> Attitudes, the end products of the socialization process, significantly influences one's responses to cultural products, to other persons, and to groups of persons. If the attitude of a person toward a given object, or class of objects, is known, it can be used in conjunction with situational and other dispositional variables to predict and explain reactions of the person to that class of objects. To the extent that principles governing the change of attitudes are known, they may be used to manipulate the individual's reactions to relevant objects (as is exemplified in psychotherapy, education, and propaganda).

Cardno (1955), also, pointed out that attitude entails an existing predisposition to respond to social objects which in interaction with situational and other dispositional variables, guides and directs the overt behavior of an indivi-

dual. An attitude or perception, thus, can be defined as a value judgement, a belief, or a predisposition about a principle, condition, or situation that influences behavior. Therefore, an individual's attitudes or perceptions toward a particular situation, condition, or court decision may directly or indirectly influence his or her action(s) toward that decision or issue. It, then, can be assumed that those school principals who agree with a court decision would be more inclined to enforce the letter and intent of a court decision more so than those principals who disagree with a particular court decision. Also, since public school principals have a major responsibility for the enforcement of court decisions, it is important to determine their attitudes (perceptions) and possible attitudinal conflicts toward major court decisions affecting education and the management of educational programs, personnel, students, and facilities.

Instrumentation

This study is based on data taken from Nwanne's doctoral dissertation (1986) that was written under the direction of Dr. Roosevelt Washington, Jr. Also, the instrument used in this study was a law questionnaire that was developed by Washington and Nwanne. It contained fifty actual Supreme Court decisions that were condensed from the official court records, the United States Code, to which the participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement (SA = Strongly Agree or A = Agree) or disagreement (D = Disagree or SD =

Strongly Disagree) with each court decision. Content validity of the instrument was established using a panel of five experts who had school law training and school administrative experience. Also, a group of twenty graduate students who currently held a valid Texas administrator's certificate were used to establish test-retest reliability of the instrument (r = .89). Six out of the fifty U.S. Supreme Court decisions from the law questionnaire were analyzed for the purposes of this study.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of all of the public school principals in the 5732 schools (1299 secondary school principals, 996 junior high school principals, and 3477 elementary school principals) in the State of Texas. From this population of principals, a random sample of 600 principals were mailed law questionnaires to complete. From the 600 randomly selected sample of participants in the study, there were 410 (68.3%) who returned completed and usable law questionnaires for analysis. The principals were grouped according to the following independent variables:

1. Type of School in which the principals worked:
   a. Elementary (K-5) = 222
   b. Jr. High (6-8) = 82
   c. Secondary (9-12) = 101

2. Sex of Principals:
   a. Males = 336
   b. Females = 73

3. Years of Experience as a Principal:
   a. 1-10 years of experience = 235
   b. 11-20 years of experience = 106
   c. 21 plus years of experience = 63

4. Ethnicity or Race of the Principals:
   a. Caucasian (White) = 328
   b. Afro-American (Black) = 33
   c. Hispanic = 46

5. Size of the School District:
   a. 1-9999 ADA = 112
   b. 10000-4999 ADA = 120
   c. 50000-9999 ADA = 61
   d. 10,000 plus ADA = 114

Statistical Analyses of Data

The returned law questionnaires were analyzed using the chi-square test of independence to determine if there were significant differences between and among the principals when they were grouped by each of the independent variables of the study. Whenever a significant difference was found between principals grouped by each of the variables using the chi-square analysis, the Z-test of differences in proportions between groups was used to determine which of the groups in each category of variables had a significantly higher proportion of respondents in agreement (SA + A) or disagreement (SD + D) with each of the court decisions. A summary of the chi-square analyses of the principals' responses to each of the six U.S. Supreme Court decisions is contained in Table 1.

Findings

A summary of the statistically significant findings

concerning the principals' responses to each of the court decisions follows.

1. In the court decision prohibiting public school education on a segregated basis to students, Brown v. Board of Education, there were no significant differences among the responses of the principals when grouped according to all the variables. In all analyses, a majority of the principals (90%) agreed with this court decision.

2. An overall significant majority of the principals (72.3%) were in agreement with the court decision, Griffin v. School Board, prohibiting a state law requiring the closing of some public schools that contributed to the development and support of private segregated schools. However, principals with one to ten of experience were more in agreement with this court decision than principals with twenty-one plus years of experience ($Z = 2.24$, $p < .05$).

3. An overall signifcant majority of the principals (59.6%) were in agreement with the court decision, Green v. County School Board of New Kent County, prohibiting a school board rule involving a "freedom of choice" plan that permitted students to choose annually which school they wish to attend, because it fostered a dual system of segregated education. However, Black principals were more in agreement with this court decision than Hispanic principals ($Z = 3.34$, $p < .05$). Furthermore, Black principals were more in agreement with this court decision than white principals ($Z = 4.67$, $p < .05$).

4. In the court decision ruling that when it is proved that school authorities intentionally change school attendance boundaries, select school sites, and use a neighborhood school policy such that racial or ethnic segregation of students is created or maintained has the effect of creating de jure segregation which is unconstitutional, Key v. School District No. 1 Denver, there were significant differences in the race variable. A significantly greater percentage of Black principals were in agreement with this court decision than White principals ($Z = 2.48$, $p < .05$). In all analyses, a majority of the principals (85.2%) agreed with this court decision.

5. Also in the court decision that ruled the use of busing to achieve racial desegregation is a judicially acceptable alternative where de jure segregation has been proven to exist, Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, there were significant differences in years of experience and race variables. A significantly greater percentage of principals with one to ten years of experience were in agreement with this court decision than principals with twenty-one plus years of experience ($Z = 2.23$, $p < .05$). A significantly greater percentage of Black principals were in agreement with this court decision than Hispanic principals ($Z = 3.03$, $p < .05$). A significantly greater percentage of Black principals were in agreement with this court decision than White principals ($Z = 6.13$, $p < .05$). In all analyses a majority of

the principals (51.6%) agreed with this court decision.

6. An overall significant majority of the principals (84.5%) were in agreement with the court decision, Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education, that ruled school districts must terminate a dual segregated school system based on race and operate only a unitary school system. On the other hand, there were significant differences in race variable. A significantly greater percentage of Black principals were in agreement with this court decision than White principals ($Z = 2.66$, $p < .05$).

Summary and Discussion

The overall majority of the public school principals in the State of Texas were in agreement with all the six U.S. Supreme Court decisions dealing with desegregation issues. Although collectively the margin of agreement with the court decision that allowed the use of busing to achieve racial desegregation as a judicially acceptable alternative where de jure segregation has been proven to exist is small (51.6%) when compared to other court decisions, more White principals were opposed to this decision than the other ethnic groups. In general busing has been a controversial issue and there are a lot of people that question its efficacy. Even former Chief Justice of U.S., Burger in his concurring opinion in Columbus Board of Education v. Penick Case, 443 U.S. 449,469 (1979), noted that it is becoming increasingly doubtful that massive public transportation

really accomplishes the desirable objectives sought.

There were some differences in the perceptions of the principals to these court decisions in some of the variables, but there were no differences among principals grouped according to type of school, sex and school district size (enrollment). Also there were two cases in which there were differences in perceptions among the principals according to years of experience and four cases in which there were differences based on race variable. Therefore, it can be concluded that the race of public school principals in the State of Texas substantially affect their perceptions toward court decisions concerning desegregation issues.

TABLE 1

CHI-SQUARE (X^2) ANALYSES OF PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD EACH OF THE SIX U.S. SUPREME COURT DECISIONS CONCERNING DESEGREGATION ISSUES

	Name of Case	A/D	df=3 Sex	df=6 Exp.	df=6 Race	df=6 Type of School	df=9 Size of District
1.	Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483, (1954)	A	1.45	3.41	4.27	0.17	4.27
2.	Griffin v. School Board , 377 U.S. 218, (1964)	A	0.86	6.93*	2.87	3.02	0.83
3.	Green v. County School Board of New Kent County, 391, U.S. 430, (1968)	A	0.04	2.39	24.50*	0.58	2.30
4.	Keyes v. School District No. 1 Denver, 413, U.S. 189, (1973)	A	0.64	0.11	6.22*	2.05	2.02
5.	Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, 402 U.S. 1, (1971)	A	2.28	7.20*	50.45*	5.41	4.48
6.	Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education, 396 U.S. 19, (1969)	A	0.03	2.90	10.66*	1.17	4.05

* = X^2, that is statistically significant, $p < .05$

A = An overall majority in Agreement

D = An overall majority in Disagreement

REFERENCES

Cardno, J. A. (1955), The Notion of Attitude: An Historical Note. Psychological Reports, 1, 345-352.

Henderson, George, and David Hall (1985). Thirty Years After Brown: Looking Ahead. Washburn Law Journal, 24, 227-252.

Nwanne, Andrew I., (1986). The Perceptions of Public School Principals in the State of Texas Concerning Selected Court Decisions. (Doctoral Dissertation, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas).

Reid, Herbert O., Sr., and Frankie Foster-Davis (1983). The Law and Education Since 1954. Journal of Negro Education, 52, 234-249.

Reynolds, William B., (1984). Individualism vs. Group Rights: The Legacy of Brown. The Yale Law Journals, 93, 995-1005.

Shane, Peter M., (1984). School Desegregation Remedies and the Fair Governance of Schools. University of Pennsylvania Law Review, 132, 1041-1129.

Shaw, Marvin E., and Jack M. Wright (1967). Scales for the Measurement of Attitudes. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.